

Ring ring 6

Two thirds of Belgacom's turnover involves products that didn't exist 15 years ago, says CEO Didier Bellens. We look at the latest gizmo coming to a phone near you.



Vampire alert 8

Dark and edgy films from all over the world get aired in Brussels during the annual Festival of Fantasy Films. Our critic enjoys the eclectic mix of blood, gore and death.



Let's dance 9

The world is in deep recession, but that's no reason to sulk at home. So take your partner and head down to De Markten in Brussels for a nostalgic dance in the streets.



Material world

Economic crises are nothing new in Flanders. One of the worst occurred in the cloth industry nearly seven hundred years ago

DENZIL WALTON

The period between the 11th and 13th centuries was a golden age for Flanders. Thanks to the diligence of its weavers and the entrepreneurship of its merchants, Flemish cloth was renowned for its exceptionally high quality and was in great demand throughout Europe and beyond. The industry attracted wealthy Italian and Spanish merchants and bankers to the Flemish cities and financed the development of Ghent and Ypres, while turning Bruges into the busiest port in northern Europe. Yet in the 14th century the industry stagnated and by the early 15th century had declined to a fraction of its former glory.

The rise ...

Flemish cloth has long been an admired commodity. When the Romans entered the region

they called Belgica, the high-quality cloth woven by the locals was greatly valued for making a man's *toga* and a woman's *stola*. In the early Middle Ages, Flanders' major trading partners were situated on the North Sea and Baltic, since these areas were easily accessible by ship. Records exist of Flemish cloth turning up in the markets of Novgorod in Russia.

A number of factors were combined to contribute to this position. There was an ancient tradition of craftsmanship in the Low Countries, particularly in the monasteries and abbeys. The population density of the region was relatively high, forcing residents to supplement agriculture with other trades. And the terrain was suitable for rearing sheep, particularly on the newly reclaimed polders.

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© National Gallery, London

Artists bring ancient Roman curse on NATO

Writers and poets invoke spirit of Cato the Elder

Flemish artists, poets and musicians are involved in a bizarre conspiracy to protest at the existence of NATO while echoing the words of a Roman senator on the vanished city of Carthage. Last week's Passa Porta literary festival in Brussels was the occasion for at least one performer to speak the single sentence: "Overigens, ben ik van mening dat de NAVO afgeschaft moet worden" (Furthermore, I am of the opinion that NATO must be abolished).

The sentence is an echo of the words of Roman senator Marcus Porcius Cato, known as Cato the Elder (234-149 BC), who hated the city of Carthage with such venom

that he would insert the sentence into every speech he made, regardless of the subject: "*Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam*" (Furthermore I am of the opinion that Carthage must be destroyed).

The protest is the initiative of Vredesactie, a "pluralistic and unfiliated peace movement". Their action NATO Game Over is aimed at dismantling the organisation, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this week but is seen as a relic of the Cold War and a body which no longer has any purpose. Demonstrators last week clashed with police when they attempted to breach the security perimeter at the organisation's

Haren headquarters using rope ladders and carpets to climb over razor-wire.

Meanwhile a number of poets, writers and musicians have undertaken to speak the Catonian imprecation at events in which they are taking part. According to *De Standaard* newspaper last Friday, writer-singer Elvis Peeters pronounced the phrase at an event in Willebroek. Others were expected to follow suit, but plans have not been revealed in advance. A website and blog by Peeters lists the occasions when the words have been pronounced.

→ www.overigens.be

Kim is back

Clijsters aims for US Open success

ALAN HOPE

Kim Clijsters, the Flemish tennis star who once held the world number one spot, is to return to competition, she announced at a press conference in her home town of Bree in Limburg last week. Kim is already in training for a series of exhibition matches, but now intends to go further, she revealed.

The bug seems to have bitten when Kim was asked to play an exhibition match against Steffi Graf at Wimbledon this year. "I was very honoured, and started training really hard," she said. "The more I worked at it, the more my hunger for the ball increased. I kept asking myself if a comeback

would be possible. That's why I'm taking the chance; I'm going after the challenge. Call it a second career rather than a comeback."

Kim retired from competition in May 2007 because of a wrist injury, and married basketball player Brian Lynch in July that year. The couple had a baby girl, Jada, in February 2008. Her father, former Red Devil Lei Clijsters, died in January this year.

Born in June 1983 in Bilzen, Kim Antonie Lode Clijsters was an accomplished junior player, coming second at Wimbledon as a junior in 1998, and doubling up

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News in brief

A man who was sacked from his job as a bus driver for De Lijn for drunk driving is back behind the wheel of a bus – driving for De Lijn. The man admitted drinking three litres of wine the evening before he was tested and found to be over the blood alcohol limit. He now works for a private bus company which carries out contracts for the public transport authority. A spokesman for De Lijn said he deserved a second chance.

Foreign affairs minister Karel De Gucht and his wife Mireille Schreurs have been cleared of **insider trading** in connection with the sale of Fortis shares in October last year. De Gucht and his wife had been accused of using his inside knowledge of the bank's troubles to offload shares that belonged to Schreurs' mother before the price plummeted. However the investigation by a parliamentary commission found that he had made misleading statements about his contacts with a bank manager.

A Chiro youth group leader whose **newborn baby** was found dead in the group's equipment shed in November last year in Kessel-Lo has admitted suffocating the baby. The 23-year-old has so far maintained the baby was stillborn and hidden among camping equipment belonging to the Catholic youth movement. She has now been charged with manslaughter.

Nand Buyl, an actor described as a "monument" of Flemish theatre, died last week aged 86 in a Brussels hospital following a stroke. Buyl's career lasted almost eight decades, from his first appearance as a child actor to the 2006 comedy *Vidange Perdue*, and included theatre, film and television. He was best-known as Schipper Matthias in the 1950s TV series *Schipper naast Mathilde*, in which he starred beside Chris Lomme, who became his wife of 45 years.

Daily newspaper *De Morgen* will not after all move from its current premises in central Brussels to Kobbegem near Asse, the paper's parent company De Persgroep has announced. At the same time, the number of jobs to be lost among editorial staff has been cut from 26 to 15.

The family of the folk singer **Wannes Van de Velde**, who died in November, have asked Antwerp city council to withdraw plans to name a street after him, culture alderman Philip Heylen said.

Two in 100 children "have psychopathic traits"

Every school in Flanders has about 20 students who are devoid of emotion, extremely manipulative and have no compassion for or empathy with their fellow human beings – the textbook definition of the psychopath. According to research carried out by the University of Ghent, 2% of secondary school children show "signs of a psychopathic personality".

However the news is better than it appears. Not all psychopaths turn into mass murderers like Marc Dutroux, who showed signs of the same condition. Nor do all of the youngsters concerned turn into psychopathic adults. "It's not because you have a psychopathic personality as a child that you carry it into adulthood," said researcher Frédéric Declercq. Scientists estimate the rate among the adult population at about one in a hundred, suggesting that half of all teenage psychopaths lose the personality traits as they get older.

The research team administered a questionnaire to 538 students in two schools, using questions developed by the Swedish expert Henrik Andershed adapted for youths aged 12 to 17. According to a checklist drawn up by the Canadian criminal psychologist Robert D. Hare, distinguishing features of the psychopathic personality include:

- a smooth talker, high self-esteem, persistent liar
- no sense of responsibility, emotionally shallow, manipulative
- lacking guilt or shame, cannot keep to agreements, lives off of others
- constantly seeking sensation, sexually promiscuous, many but shallow relationships

→ tinyurl.com/hare-checklist

They also declined a statue or monument in his honour, but the city will dedicate the first of its planned poetry walls to the musician, with the lyrics of his song *De dichter* (The Poet).

A gambling expert from Loppem has been appointed as head of the new **anti-corruption unit** in UEFA, the Union of European Football Associations. Karl Dhont hit the headlines in 2005 when he revealed the existence of widespread corruption in Belgian football at the hands of a Chinese betting syndicate. He will now sit on the Union's disciplinary board and lead a unit to investigate allegations of corruption and match-fixing.

A Staffordshire bull terrier that attacked a ten-month-old baby in Willebroek last week is being examined by an animal psychologist who must decide if the dog can be allowed to live. The dog attacked baby Chenaya in the family home, severely injuring her leg. The town's mayor ordered the evaluation by a specialist, who was due to make his verdict known this week.

Leuven-based brewer AB InBev may not have sole rights to the trade names Budweiser or Bud in Europe, the European Court of First Instance ruled last week. The small Czech brewer Budejovický

Budvar already has the rights to the name Budweiser in Germany, Austria, Italy and the Benelux.

Ghent politician **Freya Van den Bossche** is in 19th place in a poll to find the most beautiful female politician in the world, run by the Spanish polling website <http://listas.20minutos.es>. In the lead is Lucia Leon of Peru, followed by Mara Carfagna of Italy and Manuela Davila of Brazil. The youngest contender is Julia Bonk of Germany, and the oldest the former US presidential candidate Hilary Clinton, aged 61.



The cover image is a detail from Rogier van der Weyden's *The Magdalen Reading* from the collection of the National Gallery, London. The painting is one of the highlights of an exhibition on Van der Weyden being held in Leuven to mark the opening of the city museum M, beginning 20 September.

FLANDERS TODAY

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Editor: Derek Blyth
Deputy editor: Lisa Bradshaw
News editor: Alan Hope
Agenda: Sarah Crew, Robyn Boyle
Picture research: Esther Bourrée
Prepress: Nancy Temmerman
Contributors: Dustin Benner, Marie Dumont, Stéphanie Duval, Sharon Light, Alistair MacLean, Marc Maes, Dave Meyer, Ian Mundell, Anja Otte, Monique Philips, Saffina Rana, Leander Schaerlaeckens, Denzil Walton
Project manager: Pascale Zoetaert
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NV Vlaamse Uitgeversmaatschappij
Gossetlaan 28, 1702 Groot-Bijgaarden
Editorial address: Gossetlaan 30
1702 Groot-Bijgaarden
Tel.: 02.373.99.09 – Fax: 02.375.98.22
E-mail: editorial@flandertoday.eu
Subscriptions: France Lycops
Tel: 02.373.83.59
E-mail: subscriptions@flandertoday.eu
Advertising: Evelynne Fregonese
Tel: 02.373.83.57
E-mail: advertising@flandertoday.eu
Verantwoordelijke uitgever:
Derek Blyth



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Former world number one felt "hunger for competition"

→ Continued from page 1

with Jelena Dokić to win the French Open the same year. The following year she made it to the fourth round of the adult tournament at Wimbledon, where she was defeated by Steffi Graf, her childhood idol. She played her first Grand Slam final at Roland Garros in 2001, losing to Jennifer Capriati. In August 2003 she became the first ever number one in the world rankings without a Grand Slam victory to her name, and held the spot for 12 weeks.

But injury plagued her career, from 2004 on when a wrist injury and surgery took her out of competition for almost a year, made worse by a premature comeback which made the injury worse. The US Open in 2005, however, marked her first Grand Slam victory, against Mary Pierce in two sets. Injury returned the following year, this time in the hip and ankle, forcing her to withdraw from some important matches. Nevertheless, she managed to rise to number one again.

Kim will train with the Belgian Fed Cup team for their matches against Canada next month, and later take part in tournaments in Cincinnati and Toronto in August before the US Open at the end of the month. For the latter Grand Slam tournament, however, she will need a wild card, for which she has applied, and which is unlikely to be refused. What her plans are after that, nobody is saying. "Obviously the chance exists that I could take part in tournaments after that, but I'm not looking that far ahead for the moment," she said last week. "I don't necessarily want to be the best in the world."

She does have a new priority in her life now, she said. "I've got a completely different life now: I'm married, I have a little girl and I lost my Dad." Asked how she would fit her plans to Jada, she replied, "That will be a question of management, but of course she comes first."



FIFTH COLUMN

Traditional or not?

There seems to be no stopping Lijst Dedecker, the party of former judo coach Jean-Marie Dedecker that will take part in the regional elections for the first time in June. In a recent opinion poll, it comes out as the second largest party in Flanders, with more than 16% of the vote.

LDD is not a traditional party, which is part of its success. The party is an attractive alternative to voters that are fed up with all politics.

Nevertheless, LDD is just like any other party when it comes to drawing up the election lists. The higher a candidate appears on the list, the greater the chances of election. That's why the drawing up of the lists often ends in bitter fighting. Usually the party leadership gets the final say.

In the federal elections of 2007, LDD did not give much thought to its lists, as it never expected to get all that many representatives elected. This time LDD wants to avoid that mistake. And there is no lack of candidates. Ever since it became obvious that LDD was serious, it has attracted enthusiasts of all kinds. "Like moths to lamp," according to De Standaard.

Some of the hopefuls, like Professor Boudewijn Bouckaert or former journalist Derk-Jan Eppink, are ideologically close to Jean-Marie Dedecker's anti-interventionism. Other people are more of a surprise, like former senator Mimount Bousakla, who used to call herself a socialist.

Last week, the announcement that Dr Luc Beaucourt was to join LDD came as a bit of a bombshell. Beaucourt is well-known for campaigning against road accidents, while LDD considers speed limits more or less an infringement of personal liberty. By the end of the week, Beaucourt was no longer a candidate.

Beaucourt's brief stint caused nervousness in LDD's party ranks, as it was expected that he would be topping the Antwerp list. Bousakla announced that she would no longer be a candidate, as long as her position on the list was unsure. At around the same time, it became known that Jurgen Verstrepen (former Vlaams Belang), another Antwerp hopeful, had fallen out of grace. In Limburg, John Vrancken (also former Vlaams Belang) announced that he was leaving the party, as "newcomers always get the best deal." It's all very, very traditional. Although that does not stop LDD.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€61 million

cost to the Flemish region's economy of time lost in traffic, according to figures from mobility minister Kathleen Van Brempt.

72%

Percentage of people who support a smoking ban in restaurants and in the workplace, according to figures from the EU Commission. But only 40.6% favour a

complete smoking ban in pubs.

105

firearms seized by customs officers at Brussels airport – 65 pistols and 40 antique weapons, all destined for an arms dealer living in Mechelen. The Mechelen prosecutor confirmed that the man is the subject of an investigation.

160,040

people who still have not paid

the obligatory €25 care-insurance premium charged by the Flemish region for non-medical costs involved in care. Three years of non- or late payment can lead to a fine of €250.

1,575

cases of missing persons opened by the federal police in 2008 – 100 more than the previous year. The age group most affected remains 13- to 18-year-olds

(330), although the number has fallen. The biggest increase came among people aged 51 to 60 (155) which was up nearly 30%.

9,139,770

work days lost to stress last year, according to a poll by consumer organisation Test-Aankoop. One in five people polled said they suffered stress at work.

FOCUS

Beyond the Oyster

MARK TUINSTRAAT

Pazar Producten, a small medical electronics firm located in Baal, Flemish Brabant, has won a contract for the supply of electronic ticketing devices for London Transport. The present "Oyster card" will be superseded by the Baal company's "Splinter device".

The Oyster Card is a form of electronic ticketing that can be loaded with whichever ticket that suits. It has the advantage of being a contactless smartcard, which passengers pass over electronic readers when entering and leaving the transport system. This reduces the number of cash transactions at ticket offices and enables the transport company to monitor passenger movements. A similar system is being introduced in Brussels under the name of Mobib.



Trials in London with the Splinter arm implant were described as "very encouraging" by a Transport for London spokesperson

The Pazar system takes the Oyster card one stage further in the form of a tiny implant in the right arm. The Baal company has been collaborating with Kevin Smart, Professor of Cybernetics at the University of Reading in England. Professor Smart has carried out pioneering experiments on neuro-surgical implantation, linking his nervous system directly to a computer in order to assess the latest technology for use with the disabled.

The professor is enthusiastic about his involvement with the Pazar system: "In comparison with the work on neural commanding that we have been doing at Reading, the Splinter system is really quite primitive, but the benefits will be enormous," he says. "It's a fine example of retro-advancing in science, and I am proud to be associated with it."

Alex Eihooft, the brain behind Pazar, is equally upbeat: "We started like Bill Gates playing around with electronics in the garage, and now we are on the brink of a major breakthrough in transport management. We first met with London Transport's head, Tim Parker, last year and are amazed that our project has moved along at such a speed."

Experiments were run two years ago using four of Eihooft's colleagues and himself. As he explains, things could not have gone more smoothly: "The injection of the 4mm device into the arm is almost painless and certainly the next day the carrier forgets it's there. We had reading devices attached to our office

entrance, which we could swipe instead of using a key. It was almost like a game."

The results convinced Eihooft that he should approach a transport provider for further tests. His initial contact with London Transport coincided with a review of the Oyster card, initiated by the newly appointed Parker. Further refinements were developed in collaboration with Professor Smart, and, last September, the five guinea pigs from Baal had their Splinters reprogrammed to carry the information needed to clear the existing Oyster readers used in London.

"That," says Eihooft, "is the beauty of the Splinter: no new readers are needed. Our implants worked immediately, and London Transport was hooked! The possibilities for other uses are also opening up." To express its gratitude, London Transport has given the "Baal five" unlimited access. "What with the euro being so strong against the pound and our Splinters, we are all planning holidays in London this year."

Londoners can change to the Splinter by October of this year. An extensive advertising campaign is being launched in the summer to prepare the public. Reductions are to be offered on all forms of travel ticket to those who have the Splinter implanted by the end of the year.

Baal, the home of cycling heroes Sven Nys and Niels Albert, is holding a reception for Pazar employees in the town hall this Friday.

Cost-cutting panic or investments in human capital?

In times like these, where we have to do more with less, there are two types of managers. **Those who cut costs** across the board, and **those who even now choose to continue to invest** prudently. Which type are you? The financial crisis and the uncertain economic situation are confronting managers with new challenges, but all too often they are also driving them to take decisions that are infused with panic and doom-and-gloom. But the ones who are forward-thinking and keep to their own course don't slam on the brakes – instead, they invest in the future.

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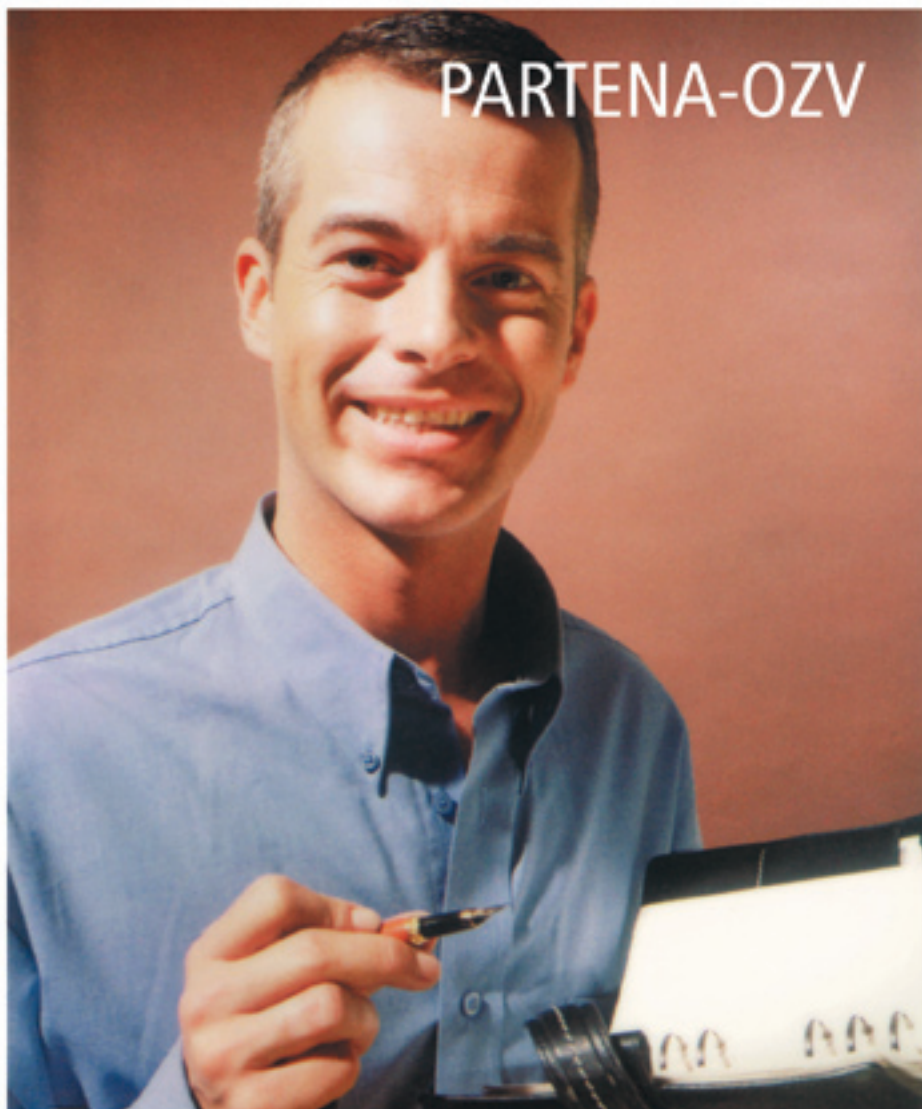
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Material world

How cloth turned Flanders into a global powerhouse

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The cloth hall at Ypres: symbol of a booming industry

→ Continued from page 1

As the industry grew, so did the towns. “Rural weavers, spinners and fullers migrated to Bruges, Ghent and Ypres where the burgeoning cloth trade was centred,” says Professor Marc Boone, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Ghent. “A major acceleration occurred when weaving underwent a technological revolution in the 11th century. The shift from the conventional horizontal to the new vertical loom is estimated to have tripled workers’ productivity.”

In the early 12th century, Flemish cloth merchants began to look towards the south of Europe for a new export market, and they started to participate in the grand fairs of Champagne in France. These were rapidly becoming the most commercially-important trade fairs on the European continent and provided the necessary link between the Low Countries and Italy – which at the time were the two main commercial hubs in the known world. The commerce focused on a cycle of six fairs, each lasting six weeks. Two each were held in Provins and Troyes, and one each in Bar-sur-Aube and Lagny.

Soon every textile producing town in Flanders had a presence in the cloth halls of Provins and Troyes. Here, their cloth was snapped up by Italian merchants, who took their purchases back to the cities of Genoa, Milan and Florence and even further afield to the Middle East.

Towards the end of the 13th century, a conflict arose between the King of France, who had recently annexed the county of Champagne, and the Count of Flanders. The result was that Flemish cloth was forbidden to be sold at the Champagne fairs. A potential economic disaster was averted by the Italians. With their newer, larger galleys, they opened up a direct sea route through the Straits of Gibraltar and up the French coast to Flanders.

Bruges was immediately catapulted into the status of a leading international port. A regular galley service between Genoa and Bruges was established. Venice was slow to follow, but by 1314 had supplemented her usual route over the Alps to the Low Countries with a maritime service to Bruges. Venetian merchants could not afford to delay, because by then Bruges was the most important European market north of the Alps. Italian merchants and bankers

arrived in large numbers, installing themselves in resident colonies. Their money led to the construction of numerous prestigious buildings.

“The famous cloth halls typified the wealth created by the cloth trade,” says Boone. “Not only were they the centres of trade, they were important status symbols too. There would have been a lot of competition between towns to build the biggest, most impressive cloth hall.”

It was a boom time for Flemish cloth. “In Ghent, almost two-thirds of its 65,000 inhabitants were directly or indirectly associated with the textile industry,” explains Boone. “So great was the production of Flemish draperies at that time that it has been regarded as an industrial revolution only a little less advanced than that at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries.” However, as in industrial 19th century England, an imbalance existed between the different classes.

At one extreme were the patricians, members of the wealthy families who had interests in the cloth industry and to a large extent governed the textile towns. They lived in luxury in inner city palatial buildings. At the other extreme were the textile workers, who were often relegated to peripheral quarters where the factories were located. Even this group had its divisions. Weavers used the services of spinners, fullers and threadmakers. In Ghent, conflicts between weavers and fullers repeatedly led to social and political unrest, since both groups strived for political influence. The weavers consistently came out on top. The fullers were particularly poorly paid, and their job was considered filthy and degrading.

In the traditional process used in the Low Countries from the 14th to 16th centuries, the fullers placed the woven cloth in a large vat containing a mixture of hot water, fuller’s earth (a claylike substance) and urine. The fuller would then stamp upon the cloth in this noxious emulsion for three days – or even longer in the case of very luxurious cloths. “It’s therefore no surprise that being a fuller was considered the lowest, most degrading job,” says Professor Boone. “What’s more, the addition of dyes at this stage led to fullers having permanently discoloured hands and feet.”

The inequality between the patricians and textile workers led to uprisings. In Ghent in 1252 and 1274, poor cloth workers demon-

strated against their lack of rights. In 1280 workers took to the streets in virtually every textile town in Flanders to protest against their working conditions. It was not until the time of Jacques van Artevelde, 50 years later, that the status of Flemish textile workers improved. By then however it was too late; the Flemish textile industry was already in decline.

The fall ...

According to experts, there were three main reasons behind the decline of the Flemish cloth industry. One was the sand that for a number of years had been gradually silting up Bruges harbour. Amidst concerns that the Bruges harbour would become inaccessible, the nearby port of Damme was built in 1180. But by the end of the 13th century even Damme could no longer accept the deep draught Italian ships. In 1290 a new but even more distant seaport was opened in Sluis. The improvement was only temporary. Sluis harbour also silted up and the larger ships had to anchor at an offshore island and forward their cargoes to Sluis by barge, which wasted time and money. Bruges was beginning to lose its status, and the process of exporting cloth was no longer as straightforward as it used to be.

With the port facilities becoming less convenient, Italian merchants and bankers moved eastwards to Antwerp. It was not only a better port for deep draught ships but also a more strategic location. It gave merchants easy access to the new land trade

routes that were developing not through France but through Germany, and which offered other, more profitable investments than cloth.

Another reason for the decline was the political tension between England and France, which often had repercussions in the economy of Flanders. An English embargo on the export of wool to Flanders was a frequent weapon in the conflict, and an effective one too. Without high quality English wool, there could be no high quality Flemish cloth.

Thirdly, Flemish cloth was, for the first time, facing serious competition. England itself was developing its own cloth industry. To protect it, England gradually increased the tax on the export of its wool.

A cheaper alternative to English wool was found. It came from the Merino sheep of Spain. Its import into Flanders marked the appearance of Spanish merchants in Bruges, Ghent and Ypres. However, the quality of Spanish wool, while perfectly satisfactory for medium-quality garments, was not suitable for the luxury woollens on which the Flemish cloth industry had been based. The Flemish monopoly had been broken.

Some Flemish textile workers migrated to England to seek work but most remained to await better times. Their prospects improved in the late 14th century after their ranks had been thinned by the Black Death. The ensuing labour shortage resulted in an enhanced market position and therefore more favourable work conditions. But the golden era of Flemish supremacy in cloth had ended.

Know your cloth

Flemish wool-based cloth manufacturing was divided into two major categories: the wet drapery and the dry drapery. This division roughly corresponds to the more modern English distinction between woollens and worsteds.

In the wet drapery, genuine woollens were woven from very fine, short and curly-fibred wools. They were heavily greased in butter or oil to restore the natural lanolin. Greasing also helped processes such as combing, carding, spinning and weaving, and protected these delicate fibres from tangling.

After removal from the loom, the woollen cloths were subjected to extensive fulling. The intense pressure, heat and chemical reaction would cleanse the cloth, remove the grease, and force the fibres to interlock. This would give the cloth its necessary cohesion and strength, making these heavy woollens virtually indestructible. The fulling was then stretched on a frame to remove any wrinkles, and to ensure even dimensions throughout.

The cloth was then handed over to the cloth finishers, who subjected it to repeated napping, using the dried seed heads of teasels. This would raise the loose fibres of the nap, which were then shorn with long, sharp shears. The end result was a very soft texture, rivalling that of silks.

In contrast, the fabrics produced by the dry draperies were made from much stronger, longer, straight-fibred wools, which required no initial greasing. Once they were fully combed, the resulting yarns, when properly twisted in the spinning processes, had sufficient strength and cohesion so that when woven they were already fairly durable. Thus they did not require any real fulling beyond a brief and simple cleansing; nor were they napped or shorn. Consequently, they were much lighter – and coarser – cloths.

Generally, the wet draperies produced the more expensive fabrics and the dry draperies the cheaper fabrics. However, there was nothing cheap about Flemish cloth. The lower strata of mediaeval society, in export markets such as Italy for example, would not have been able to afford such textiles from the Flemish draperies, especially after transport costs and taxes were added to the sales price. Such people were more likely to have worn homespun or domestically made fabrics.



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THE WEEK
IN BUSINESS**Airlines • VLM**

VLM, the Antwerp-based airline with strong connections to London City Airport, is to develop door-to-door packages for the 2012 London Olympics.

Energy • Nemo

An industrial project named Nemo will connect the Belgian and British electricity grids using a 150km-long high-tension power cable running under the North Sea. The project is estimated to be worth up to €600 million.

Health • Kruidvat

The Dutch health care and beauty products retailer Kruidvat, which has 144 stores in Flanders, is looking to hire some 100 additional staff for up to 10 new stores expected to open this year.

Industry • Villeroy & Boch

Crockery and bathroom equipment manufacturer Villeroy & Boch is to centralise the production of acrylic bathtubs at its Roeselare plant. The move follows the restructuring of the company's industrial activities and the transfer of its wellness lines to Flanders and the Netherlands.

Rail • Het Station

Het Station is the brand name for a one billion euro renovation and development programme of the country's train stations. The €1 billion project involves the redevelopment of some of the country's largest stations, with the addition of shopping centres and commuter parking spaces.

Retail • Delhaize

The country's second largest retailing company has acquired four Proda supermarkets in Romania, where it already operates 40 stores. The company also announced that it would be interested in acquiring some Carrefour supermarkets in Belgium if the French chain decided to sell its underperforming local operations.

Retail • Avanti

Avanti, the discount affiliate of the Dutch C&A clothing chain, has opened two stores in shopping centres in the Brussels area. The company is considering opening additional outlets in Flanders in the short term.

Telecom • Telenet

The cable and telecommunications company Telenet is currently in discussions on entering a bid for the country's fourth mobile phone operation – which has still to be created. The move comes as local authorities seek to implement European Union requests to increase competition on the local mobile phone market.

Belgacom moves into payments by SMS

Telecoms giant launches new brand PingPing

Belgacom, the former state-owned telecommunications company, is to cooperate with Delhaize, Accor and Coca Cola to launch a new service allowing micro-payments by mobile phone. Belgacom last week announced it was taking a 40% stake in Tunz, a specialist in mobile payments. It has also launched its own brand, PingPing, which will allow subscribers on any mobile phone network to keep an account for mobile phone payments.

Belgacom already operates a ticketing service in Antwerp and Ghent with De Lijn, which allows Proximus subscribers to pay for bus tickets by SMS. Around 1,000 tickets are paid for by SMS every day. In addition, Proximus operates SMS parking payment systems in Antwerp, Brug-

es, Hasselt, Tienen, Leuven, Schaarbeek, Lokeren, Wetteren, Turnhout and Diest. Last year 1.3 million transactions were carried out, while the company expects the number to exceed 2 million this year.

Tunz offered a sort of "electronic wallet" which allowed subscribers to pay each other by SMS, after charging their accounts online. The company holds a Europe-wide licence, which was one of the features that convinced Belgacom to buy a 40% stake.

Belgacom is also working on a system to allow the transfer of money from one country to another by mobile phone. "We believe in innovation," said Belgacom CEO Didier Bellens. "In our view, these are the



© Phonews

Belgacom CEO Didier Bellens shows the PingPing sticker that makes contactless payments possible

PingPing takes off

At a press conference last week, Didier Bellens said that agreements had been reached on micro-payment projects involving three companies:

- Accor Services, which operates the Ticket Restaurant meal-voucher system. It will switch to contactless vouchers for employees of Belgacom itself, as well as several other companies based close to the telecommunications company's headquarters next to Brussels North station. The project would allow companies to credit employees' PingPing accounts with contactless lunch-eon vouchers, which could then be used in restaurants or shops where contactless payments were also possible. Readers will be installed in the Belgacom company restaurant, and 500 employees each of Belgacom and Accor will be given PingPing chips.
- Supermarket chain Delhaize will equip cash registers in one of its city stores, the City Manhattan, near North station, with PingPing readers, allowing customers to pay for their shopping with their PingPing account or with contactless Ticket Restaurant credits.
- Drinks dispensing machines operated by the Coca Cola Company will be fitted with PingPing technology to take payments by mobile phone.

services of the future. Two-thirds of our turnover now comes from services that didn't even exist 15 years ago."

The PingPing service involves a chip contained in a sticker attached to the back of the customer's mobile phone which would then communicate with the payment technology at

point of sale. The service would be open to subscribers of any mobile phone network.

Bellens hopes to launch at least some of the PingPing services by the end of the year. "In principle, mobile payments could cover all sorts of small payments which still use cash," he said.

Lange Wapper plan goes to referendum

Decision postponed to October

The Flemish government is to go ahead and make an application for planning permission to construct the much-discussed Lange Wapper viaduct in Antwerp. But a final decision on whether the plan will ever see the light of day will not be taken before October.

After discussions at the weekend between supporters within the government of various competing plans, ministers reached a compromise which will give the people of Antwerp a chance to express their view on the development – though the referendum will not be binding on the government.

The so-called Oosterweel Link is a plan to connect the left bank of the Scheldt with the Antwerp

Ring and E19. Two different plans are still in the running –one developed by the Antwerp Mobile Management (BAM) agency (which consists of a tunnel under the river, and a viaduct passing over populated parts of the inner city to join the Ring near Merksem) and another worked out by study bureau ARUP/SUM (involving a tunnel running in virtually a straight line from the left bank to the A12/E19 interchange north of Merksem).

The Lange Wapper viaduct is the most controversial aspect of the BAM plan, with opponents claiming it will bring pollution into residential areas as it passes only metres above houses and schools. A plan supported by activists in the groups StRaten-Generaal and Ademloos has now been rejected,

according to spokesman Manu Claeys.

The two remaining plans will be put to residents of Antwerp in a referendum in October. But the Flemish government has pledged only to "take into account" the results of the referendum. If the result is a negative one, Claeys says, "the government will simply set it aside. If they've done it with a wide-ranging study like the one by ARUP, they can certainly do it with a referendum," he said. But Antwerp mayor Patrick Janssens, who supports the ARUP/SUM plan, holds out more hope: "This referendum is not without obligation. I can't imagine how the government could stay in place if they just ignored the outcome."

New Flemish drama puts Brussels in the spotlight

Thirtysomething drama makes the city look glamorous

Flemish commercial TV station VTM is celebrating its 20th anniversary year in style, by going from strength to strength in the ratings. Last year they launched the concept of the TV-novel with *Sara*, followed into this year by *LouisLouise*, the story of a man who wakes up as a woman and the adjustments he has to make. There's another one of those coming along shortly once the present run is done. There's also a new series of *Mijn Restaurant* which is pulling in more than 800,000 viewers for its twice-weekly episodes.

And now along comes *Jes*, a new series set – unusually for home-grown Flemish drama – in Brussels, in the world of thirtysomething singles. It's billed as a comedy drama and, judging from the first episode, which went out last Wednesday but can still be watched for free on VTM's iWatch site, it's a deft balancing act between the two.

Jes (Lotte Heijtenis) lives with her overbearing boyfriend Gert. He gets a job in Shanghai, and the couple get as far as the airport before Jes

decides she doesn't want to go and, we're led to understand, especially doesn't want to go with Gert. This introduces one of the main themes of the story that follows: how today's thirtysomethings still aren't sure where they want to end up, or how they want to get there.

Jes is taken up by her old friends – and one new one – and they're as diverse a crowd as any Star Trek landing party. There's Luc (Koen De Graeve), a cynical slob who still fancies Jes; her older sister Michelle (Kader Gürbüz), whose marriage has gone cold even as she's grown hotter; her gay friend John (Johan Heldenbergh), a taxi driver and serial cruiser; and her new friend Sofia (Pascale Platel), a stranger in town with whom Jes clicks immediately.

The milieu of these people is a familiar one on TV, since it's about the same age as most TV programme-makers. Jes has been mentioned in the same breath as *Friends*, which is not accurate: it's not a laugh-fest of a comedy. It has more in common with something like *Cold Feet*. Brussels is

treated as one of the stars: the city looks familiar and exotic at the same time, and some of the night-shots have it looking almost glamorous.

- The new iWatch website offers TV on demand, not all of it in Dutch. For a couple of euros paid with credit card, home-banking or even SMS, you can watch one episode from a wide range of VTM series, including original versions (in English) of *House*, *Lie to Me* and *Bones*. The VTM news is free, as is the first episode of *Jes*, which went out last week. Today's episode will cost €2, as will subsequent episodes. The site has a few teething troubles that need to be sorted out: sometimes the server is overloaded and refuses to respond. And the full-screen option just doesn't work on my computer running Firefox.

Jes

VTM, Wednesdays at 21.40

→ www.iwatch.be



Lotte Heijtenis as Jes

© VTM

Bozar honours four composers

Brussels' Centre for Fine Arts, now known as Bozar, will honour a living Flemish composer among four composers featured in its 2009-2010 season, details of which were announced last week. In the coming two seasons Bozar and its main partners (National Orchestra, Liege Philharmonic, deFilharmonie and the Orchestra of the Muntscouwburg) will perform the complete symphonic works of Gustav Mahler, including *Das Lied von der Erde*, often considered a symphony in all but name, and marking the 150th anniversary of his birth in 2010 and the centenary of his death in 2011.

The 250th birthday of Frederic Chopin in 2010 will be the occasion of four recitals, two of them by Daniel Barenboim, as well as performances of the two piano concertos. Meanwhile, this year is Haydn's bicentenary year, and in the first part of the season Bozar will stage four of his six Parisian symphonies, the trumpet concerto, Symphony no. 102 and *Mass in the Time of War*, with Flemish culture award-winner Sigiswald Kuijken and La Petite Bande.

Finally, and closer to home, the 50th birthday of contemporary Flemish composer Luc Brewaeys is being marked by a performance of his Eighth Symphony by the Belgian National Orchestra. The work was composed in 2004 and calls for five horn soloist, but has yet to be performed. Other works by Brewaeys include Laphroaig, Bowmore, Talisker and Oban – all named after malt whiskies.

© VTM



Hundreds of dancers take commuters in Antwerp central station by surprise as a stunt to advertise the new series *Op zoek naar Maria* – the Flemish version of the BBC's *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?*, a televised search for an unknown to star in a stage production of *The Sound of Music*. The first part of the show, a sort of *American Idol* for ladies only, went out last week on VTM, presented by Clouseau lead singer Koen Wauters.

→ www.vtm.be/mariadans/

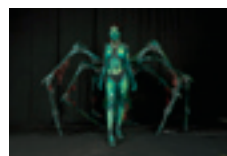
CULTURE NEWS

Kiddie-pop sensation K3 are no more. Founder-member Kathleen Aerts last week announced she will be leaving the group to pursue other career opportunities. Studio 100 boss Hans Bourlon said the split was amicable, but declined to reveal what the future held for the two remaining members, Karen Damen and Kristel Verbeke.

Dimitri Verhulst is the only Flemish author on the shortlist for the Libris Literature Prize, the biggest book prize in the Netherlands, announced last week. Verhulst is listed for his scabrous spoof history of the world *Godverdomse dagen op een godverdomse bol*, copies of which were given away with *De Morgen* newspaper in a ground-breaking promotion.

Regina Spektor and Black Eyed Peas are among the new names to be added to the bill of the Rock Werchter festival from 2 to 5 July. So far 70,000 tickets have been sold for the four-day event, including 50,000 combi-tickets. Ten performers are still to be named, while among those already announced are Kaiser Chiefs, Lily Allen, Oasis and Coldplay.

→ www.rockwerchter.be



It's alive!

Here comes a film festival that will scare the socks off you

IAN MUNDELL

Dreams and nightmares from all over the world converge on Brussels in April for the 27th international festival of fantastic film. There are spine-tingling Asian horror films, bawdy American B-movies and European films that blur the lines between art-house and grind-house. Oh, and the dead will rise up and walk the streets, but that's only on April 11.

The Belgian love of all things fantastic is not always reflected in the festival's line-up, and this year there are no local feature films on the programme. However, director Jaco Van Dormael will be on hand to present an exclusive sneak preview of his time-hopping new film *Mr Nobody*, which is strongly tipped to make its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May.

You can also check out young Belgian talent in the short film competition on April 17, which includes highlights such as *De Onbaatzuchtigen* (The Altruists) by Koen Dejaegher. This ironic portrait of a world where people can sell family members and buy replacements won a prestigious short film prize at last year's Venice Film Festival.

But perhaps the most impressive Belgian sights at the festival are the participants in the various costume events. These include a Vampire's Ball, a body painting contest and Cosplay, which involves dressing up as characters from Japanese animation series.

While some of these activities are clearly for obsessives, anyone can participate in Zombie Day on April 11, during which the festival organisers plan to make-up as many people as they can to look like the undead, and then release them into Brussels city centre. You have been warned.

Among the feature films, it is striking how far Europe has come in challenging US and Asian genre cinema. Home-grown films such as *Dead in Three Days* from Austria and *Cold Prey* from Norway have proved so successful that they are onto sequels, both appearing in the festival. Meanwhile, Spain has developed a veritable horror industry, with films such as the apocalyptic sci-fi *Before the Fall*,

the ghostly mystery *The Beckoning* and the bloody black comedy *Sexykiller*.

Horror, fantasy and sci-fi can be great entertainment for people who like bad films, and there are a fair number of movies in the festival which are unashamedly tongue-in-cheek (*Trailer Park of Terror*, anyone?). But there are also films here with something to say, and feelings to convey.

Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Film,

9-21 April

Tour & Taxis, Brussels

→ www.biff.org



Jaco Van Dormael's *Mr Nobody* takes a trip through time

Festival highlights

Franklyn

The crossed destinies of three Londoners (Sam Riley, Eva Green, Bernard Hill) with a mysterious connection to the parallel world of Meanwhile City, a cyber-metropolis ruled by a religious dictatorship, stalked by a masked vigilante. Ambitious fantasy from first-time British director Gerald McMorrow.

Let the Right One In

Twelve-year-old Oskar (Kare Hedebrant) fantasises about taking revenge on the children who bully him at school, but only considers putting his plan into action when Eli (Lina Leandersson) moves in next door. She's also a loner, but for other reasons. Subtle and atmospheric vampire film from Swed-

ish director Tomas Alfredson, which won the Golden Méliès last year for best European fantastic film.

Splinter

In America, an escaped convict and his drugged-up girlfriend (Shea Whigham, Rachel Kerbs) kidnap a couple of holiday makers (Paulo Costanzo, Jill Wagner), only to find that it is not the law on their trail but something lurking in the woods. Highly effective combination of familiar horror themes, with a fine balance of character and special effects. First-timer Toby Wilkins directs.

Kandisha

Moroccan lawyer Nyla (Amira Casar) must

defend a woman on charges of murdering her husband. The only other culprit appears to be Kandisha, an evil spirit from the 14th century. French director Jérôme Cohen Olivar takes a lesson from recent Korean and Spanish films to create an atmospheric supernatural thriller in North Africa.

Absurdistan

In a forgotten mountain village between Europe and Asia, the ancient water system is failing. Since the men are too lazy to fix it, the women issue an ultimatum: no water, no love. Broad comic fable about the battle of the sexes, without a zombie, vampire or killer robot in sight. Directed by German Veit Helmer (*Tuvalu*).

The Call of the Weird

PM DOUTRELIGNE

Catch the next big thing before it's too late

To quote the late Hunter S. Thompson, "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro". Somewhere along the way, the "weird" also get offered a slot on the bill of the annual Domino festival at the Ancienne Belgique.

Domino, now in its thirteenth incarnation, is a self-styled "exploratory expedition into the realms of musical innovation". In fact it could easily be rebranded as the *You-Saw-Them-Here-First Festival*, given the long list of international artists whose later success was in no small part aided by an appearance at Domino. Over the years, the likes of Interpol, Isobel Campbell, Black Lips, Sigur Rós and LCD Soundsystem – to name but a handful of the more recent examples – have given breakthrough performances at Domino before moving on to greater things.

In a way, Domino can be seen as the antithesis of mainstream pop/rock festivals such as T/W Classic or, worse, Night Of The Proms, where tired old lags regurgitate their greatest hits on autopilot in the most impersonal of surroundings. Much of Domino's success is due to its inspired eclecticism and "expect the unexpected" policy. Of course, not everyone on the bill will make it big (or, in Sigur Rós' case, go on to score the continuity indents for



BBC One!), and the often bizarre blend of radically different styles on offer may not be to everyone's taste.

Yet there is no denying it takes *cojones* of steel to organise an event (in the capital's most prestigious venue, no less) which, over the course of seven nights, guarantees nothing but avant-gardism, experimentalism, youthful exuberance and – who knows? – the off-chance of watching the Next Big Thing before they sell

their souls to the Empty-Vee stadium rock machine.

The line-up for Domino 09 is, as always, delightfully varied, ranging from Japanese post-rockers MONO to Austrian minimalist-electro wunderkind Fennesz, and from drum & bass semi-recluse Tom Jenkinson (a.k.a. Squarepusher) to German ambient noiseniks The Notwist. Inevitably, each night also features a host of lesser-known support acts, at least one of which must be planning their next move in their quest for world domination.

For this critic though, the undisputed stars of this year's edition are the freshly reformed A Certain Ratio (left), the Mancunian white-funk pioneers without whom, ironically, erstwhile Domino graduates LCD Soundsystem wouldn't exist. Day tickets cost between €12 and €18, but don't hang about, for at these prices demand is likely to be overwhelming.

Domino 09

Ancienne Belgique, Brussels

8-14 April

→ www.dominofestival.be

Nostalgia is the new black

In the heart of Brussels' fashionable Dansaert Quarter, people are partying like it's 1945

With global warming, jittery banks and pension funds threatening to collapse, you might wonder what a retired life will look like in the future. What will we do? What will we wear? Will chewing gum still be an option? Given the choice, rather than being miserable at home, why not head down to somewhere like De Markten in Brussels, where you can plunge into a genuinely feelgood retro dance event. Hell, why wait?

About every two months, a decidedly unhip Sunday afternoon get together takes place in de Spiegelzaal inside De Markten, or on the Oude Graanmarkt square outside. It's bang in the heart of the über trendy Dansaertstraat quarter, yet nothing could be more old fashioned than this Salon Dansant. You can watch or you can join in. It's up to you. The atmosphere is relaxed and the participants come in every age, shape and sexual inclination.

The programme kicks off with a concert by a singer or group that gently hints at retro style without being cheesy or condescending. Next on stage is DJ Oxana who works the dance crowd impeccably. The music is varied and highly camp, and includes Flemish *levensliedjes* (sentimental songs about real life that will have you crying in the street), Spanish crooners and French nostalgic summer songs. There are no strict rules on how to dance – you can glide across the floor in classic ballroom style, swing, samba or gently shuffle during one of the intimate slow numbers.

So is this just like any other pensioners' ball or old-fashioned *bal populaire*? No, says, Pol Vervaeke, who organises the monthly event. "First of all, the mood is set by the mirrors and pillars in the Spiegelzaal itself, which used to be a showroom for displaying the famous crystal chandeliers of Val St Lambert. Secondly, we consciously aim to attract youngsters and children as well – and succeed in doing so."

The Salon Dansant has been running now for



© Johan Proot

the past three years. "The initiative was originally put forward by various senior clubs that congregate in our centre here. Too small themselves to get the ball rolling, they joined up with volunteers who also loved the idea of an old-fashioned dance fest. So, three years ago, we all decided to surf the upcoming retro wave of music and dance and go for it."

The organisers have hit exactly the right formula – a carefully-chosen concert with a DJ in a relaxed setting where everyone is in a good

mood. It's welcoming, elegant and affectionate – and with any luck you'll be able to dance away in a cloud of nostalgia. Welcome to the twilight days.

De Markten

Oude Graanmarkt 5, Brussels

➡ www.demarkten.be

Take your partners

Salon Dansant 23

The 23rd Salon Dansant will be – yippee – outside in the square, hopefully with the sun shining on the trees and tables. The programme features Les Confrères de Saint-Lazaire, five clerks from the Ministry of Finance who will entertain the crowd with jokes and banter in typical Brussels gibberish – a mixture of Dutch and French and whatever other language springs to mind. They are celebrating their 15th anniversary this year, which they are marking by including a genuine big band. On the programme will be some of the best hits from 50 years of Eurovision song festival. Now that's what we call nostalgia.

21 June at 15:00

Salon Dansant 22

The next Salon Dansant, number 22, features the orchestra Cinema Retro and lead singer Zara. They will perform in accordion tempo against a backdrop of old film clips projected on a screen, taking you from a hairdresser's salon, to a zoo and far beyond. After the film plus concert, the programme switches to waltzes, tangos, boleros and other tunes from long ago.

3 May at 15:00



© Johan Proot



Reflections of the past: the Spiegelzaal was once a showroom for chandeliers



Two long-distance footpaths (GR126 and GR12) cross through the heart of Brussels. They intersect on the square in front of the Cathedral.

These routes are made for walking

You might think long-distance walking is for the mountains, but Flanders offers a surprisingly extensive network of trails

What comes to mind when you think of long-distance footpaths? The Pennine Way in England? El Camino de Santiago in Spain? France's vast network of *Grandes Randonnées*?

You probably didn't think of Flanders. But you should, because the region is criss-crossed by over 3,500 kilometres of long-distance footpaths. Modelled on the *Grandes Randonnées* of France, these GRs (*Grote Routepaden*) are clearly indicated with characteristic marks consisting of a white stripe above a red stripe.

One example is the GR12 Amsterdam to Paris footpath, which enters Flanders just south of Bergen Op Zoom. It will lead you along the River Nete and through the attractive towns of Lier and Mechelen. Admittedly, once you reach the Atomium you will need to gird up all your courage to cross Brussels, but once you reach the southern limits of Ukkel the path south through Beersel and Dworp is much more hiker-friendly.

Also entering Flanders north of Antwerp – in Essen – is GR5, which originates in the Hook of Holland in the Netherlands. The first Flemish leg takes in the beautiful if windswept Kalmthout Heath. It then continues through the woods and fields of the Kempen and the Hageland. Along the way you can get to know delightful small towns such as Averbode, Scherpenheuvel and Diest. Then it's time to push deep into Limburg, visiting Hasselt and Genk – or maybe Bokrijk open air museum – before crossing the Dutch border at Lanaken. Continue for a while longer on this trail and you'll end up on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice.

If you want to keep within Flanders, then GR5A is probably the one for you. It's a 557-kilometre



© Grote Routepaden vzw

circular route. Of course, you can get on and off where you like, but it's been designed to start and finish in Antwerp. On the way you constantly jump back and forth over the Dutch border as the trail takes you east to Bruges before hitting the coast near De Haan. Then it's an exhilarating walk along the seafront and through the dunes to De Panne. The path takes you right up to the French border before turning sharp left into the area of West Flanders known as Flanders Fields.

The former tobacco fields of Wervik pass by as you hike along the picturesque River Leie. There's even time for some gentle hill walking in the Flemish Ardennes before the path turns north and heads through Aalst to Dendermonde, where you follow the River Schelde back to Antwerp.

Of course, these routes are for serious hikers. To complete one, you would need the whole summer, or several years of free weekends. But

there are less demanding alternatives. "There are also shorter, regional GRs marked with red and yellow signs," says Bram Aertsen, Coordinator of Grote Routepaden vzw, the organisation that maintains and publicises the GRs in Flanders. "They still fall under the definition of long distance but can easily be completed in a week."

One of these is the 80-kilometre Mol-Om GR, established in the 1970s and the first GR created outside France. Expect plenty of fresh air as you follow the circular route along canals and lakes and through pine forests.

If you are thinking of walking a Flemish GR, whether for a weekend, week or longer, your first question is probably "where am I going to stay overnight?" Plan your trip in advance and you will be spoilt for choice.

"The type of accommodation depends greatly on your hiking experience, spirit of adventure and budget," says Aertsen. "Well-seasoned hikers will probably take their tents and camp on one of the many approved camping sites along Flemish GRs."

If you prefer a roof rather than canvas over your head, 25 youth hostels are dotted around Flanders, many of them on or near a GR. You have to be a member of the Flemish Youth Hostel Federation or Hostelling International, but membership only costs €15 a year. And you don't even have to be a youth! You can book a bed online, with prices ranging from €15 for a bed in a standard dormitory room to €31 for a private room. As these prices include breakfast, they are extremely good value. Also along each

GR are numerous bed and breakfasts, while the larger towns and cities have hotel accommodation.

However basic or luxurious your choice, you have to carry a heavy rucksack full of clothes and food. But there's an increasingly popular alternative in Flanders called the GR hiking holiday, in which your luggage is moved from hotel to hotel. All you have to do is walk, with only a small knapsack on your back. The price includes evening meals at each overnight stop, along with all the maps and packed lunches you need. Grote Routepaden vzw offers a selection of two to four day GR hiking holidays in all Flemish provinces. Prices range from €108 to €299 per person in a double room.

With any form of exercise, good training is essential. "We have devised a series of one-day circular walks between 15 and 20 kilometres," adds Aertsen. "They run through the most beautiful parts of the Flemish countryside, and are ideal ways to build up your strength and endurance before taking on a longer route."

Books and maps describing in detail all the GRs in Flanders can be bought on the Grote Routepaden website. If you become a member (€29 a year) you have access to a wealth of valuable extra information, such as recommendations for the best pit-stops and overnight accommodation.

So, now that spring is here, it's time to dust off your hiking boots and look for those GR signs.

➡ www.groteroutepaden.be

➡ www.jeugdherbergen.be



© Grote Routepaden vzw



No textbook needed

A new initiative by Brussels' House of Dutch reminds us that learning a language doesn't always have to be so formal

© Belga



“Every time I try to speak Dutch, they just switch to (insert any other language here).” For many who have tried their hand at learning a bit of the local language in Belgium, this scenario sounds all too familiar. Although ‘any other language’ is an exaggeration, it is meant as a ‘hats off’ to the incomparable language skills of most native Dutch speakers. What they don’t realise, though, while accommodating others by showing off their polyglotism, is that they are in fact discouraging people who might otherwise be willing to learn to speak Dutch with fluency.

The irony is that this is happening in a country so adamant about people learning and using the official languages. “I don’t know why Dutch speakers tend to reply in French or English [when they hear you are a non-native speaker trying to speak Dutch],” admits Gerdal De Vos of the House of Dutch in Brussels. “Maybe it is meant to be polite, although it comes across as anything but. Imagine if I went to London this weekend and started talking to people, just to have them reply to me in Dutch because they hear that I am Dutch-speaking.”

De Vos suggests that a new initiative called

Patati Patata (which loosely translates as ‘blablabla’) could lead to an eventual change in mentality on the part of native Dutch speakers – a willingness to break what has essentially become a bad habit. Non-Dutch speakers, in return, tend too easily to revert back into the comfort zone of their own language instead of firmly stating their desire to continue in Dutch. Plus, they figure, “What’s the point? Everybody speaks my language anyway.”

By launching *Patati Patata*, the House of Dutch hopes to break this cycle. With the support of Bert Anciaux, Flemish minister of Culture, Youth, Sports and Brussels, the project’s intention is to have native Dutch speakers form language tandems with speakers of other languages, thereby helping them feel more confident practising their Dutch in a relaxed and informal setting.

The engine behind the initiative is the colourful and dynamic website, www.patati.be. Here speakers of French, English and other languages can sign up for the opportunity to meet with a native Dutch speaker over lunch, for a drink, at the gym, or whatever. The site is full of suggested

activities, whether in your free time, at the workplace or even during your daily train commute. The idea is that tandem partners get together and brush up on their foreign language skills without additional time or money investments.

The tandem idea is by no means exclusive. Group activities are also encouraged, as evidenced by the laid-back Dutch conversation meetings already taking place every fortnight at Café Monk in Brussels. There is also a calendar of events planned such as round tables, concerts, theatre performances, workshops and bike rides.

In addition to its role as a meeting place, www.patati.be is also chock full of language tips, exercises and suggestions aimed at getting people to practise Dutch through small changes in their daily lives, such as listening to a different radio station or picking up a Dutch language newspaper instead of their familiar daily.

One of the biggest challenges behind such an initiative, of course, is informing the

public of its existence and getting eager Dutch learners involved. That is why the House of Dutch, the brains behind *Patati Patata*, is currently carrying out a marketing campaign around the initiative, and in particular the website. Don’t be surprised then if you see posters and random publicity stunts in transport hubs around Brussels this month. Still, even before active promotion of *Patati Patata* began, the site received over 120 registrations, mostly by word of mouth.

Drawing people to the site is the first step. Once registered, non-Dutch speakers can start using the integrated search engine to find new and fun ways to improve their basic knowledge of Dutch, or at least raise their confidence when placing an order at the sandwich shop. Native Dutch speakers are also encouraged to register. In return, they will get to know people with similar interests while spreading knowledge of their mother tongue.

➡ www.patati.be

Take a bite out of Brussels

The House of Dutch in Brussels is the informational mecca for anyone keen to learn Dutch. It is not a language school, but rather a place to go to determine which learning path is best for you. Taking into account many factors including your motivation to learn the language, your level, where you live and the time you have available, the House of Dutch will get you enrolled somewhere based on your needs. For example, they will help you choose from classes like ‘Dutch in the shop’, ‘Dutch at school’, ‘Dutch at the chemist’ and so much more.

“Learning Dutch is one thing,” explains House of Dutch coordinator Jona Hebbrecht, “but learning to use the language effectively, in real-life situations, is something else altogether.” Hebbrecht is of the opinion that in a city like Brussels, the overwhelming wealth of languages and cultures should be better utilised, giving more people the opportunity to learn.

To this end, the House of Dutch has set up a number of projects in addition to *Patati Patata*. *Bijt in Brussel* (Bite into Brussels), for example, encourages non Dutch-speakers to take part in Dutch socio-cultural activities. Even with a very basic knowledge of the language, one can already participate in a football match or understand the gist of a theatre piece. The House of Dutch is also the organising force behind *Duik in het Nederlands* (Dive into Dutch) which gives young adults an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the language for a week.

The House of Dutch is also active behind the scenes, providing dictionaries to catering and shop personnel across Brussels, free advice for those interested in self-study and even individualised help with pronunciation.

➡ www.huisnederlandsbrussel.be



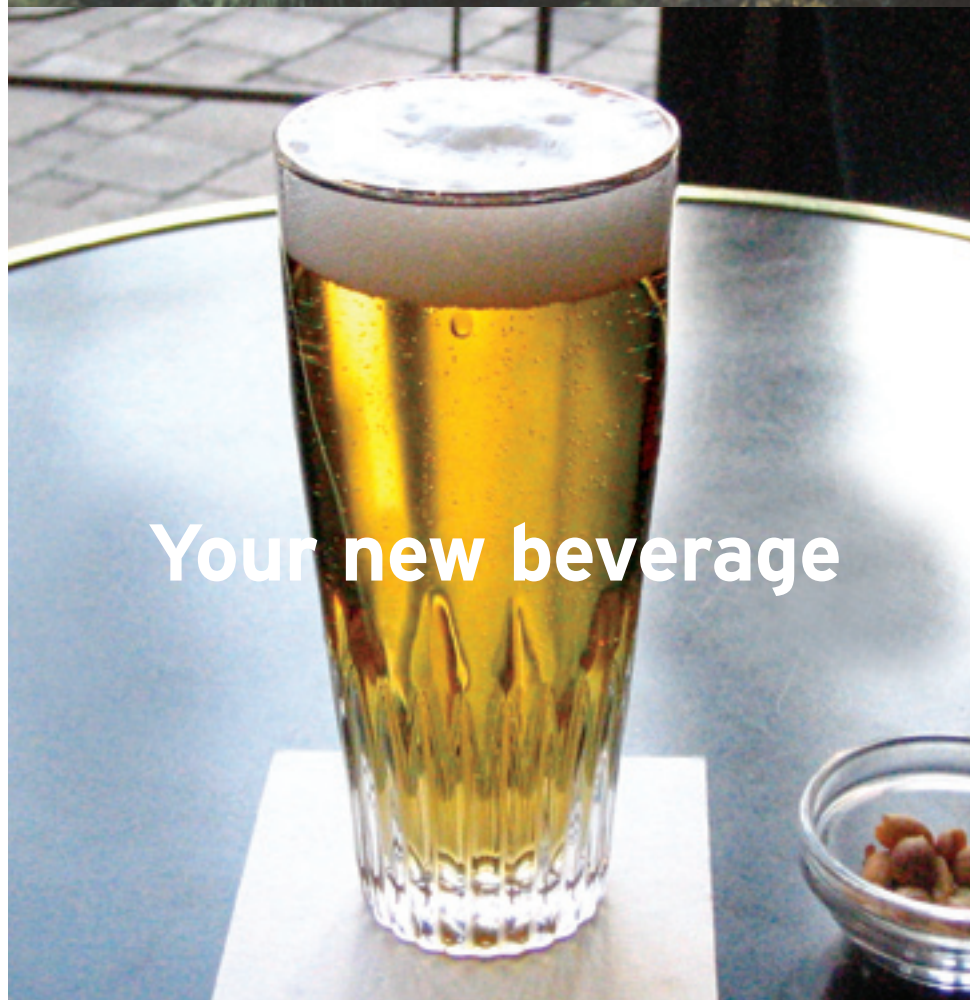
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SHARON LIGHT

Missie

Missionary. It's a loaded word even in the most benign of circumstances. But add "Belgium" and "Congo" into the mix, and you're definitely treading on challenging territory.

It was this precise complexity that interested Flemish playwright David Van Reybrouck. Not yet 40, he has already been acclaimed as one of the most influential writers of his generation. In addition to playwriting, Van Reybrouck's output includes working as a contributor to *De Morgen*, which gave him the opportunity to cultivate his exposure to Africa. Following a series of interviews with missionaries, Van Reybrouck developed the ideas for *Missie*.

The show's only actor, Bruno Vanden Broecke, is well-known in the Flemish theatre and film world. He delivers a monologue by a fictional missionary who returns to his native Belgium after years of toil amid the horrors of the Congo.

Fear not, Van Reybrouck is no missionary himself – or perhaps he is, but not in the conventional sense. As he stated in a 2007 interview given just before the show's premiere, he may be an atheist, but he believes in these missionaries. He therefore takes a sympathetic approach. Moving beyond any caricatures of the profession, he chooses instead to highlight their good works in the realms of healthcare, education, and yes, preaching.

The show was a success in the 2007-2008 KVS season, both due to the playwright's style and ability to capture these complexities, but also because of the fine work of the performer. Likewise in his 30s, Vanden Broecke skilfully plays a man roughly twice his actual age. The focus is entirely on him, not only because he is the only person on stage, but because, during the nearly two-hour-long performance, he is practically the only *thing* on stage: the sparse set of a simple podium is all he is given to work with, but he needs little more than the text to achieve a powerful effect.

Having toured Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, the original production is now back in the KVS for one much-anticipated week. KVS Artistic Director Jan Goossens notes that *Missie* is a prime example of how the KVS theatre establishes new repertoire, "if the meaning of repertoire is a text in which you capture issues and content that appeal to the population as a whole." The theatre prides itself on reaching new audiences with every show; perhaps with *Missie* they will exceed even their own expectations.

Missie

3-11 April

Production in Dutch with English surtitles.

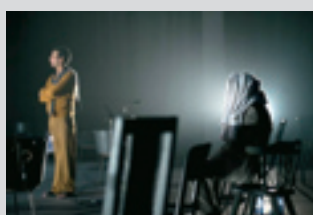
→ www.kvs.be

MORE THEATRE THIS WEEK

The Sunshine Boys → *De Werf, Bruges*

Judaspassie → *Kaaithheater, Brussels*

Maria Magdalena → *Toneelhuis, Antwerp*



© Kurt Van der Elst



Antwerp

Amuz

Kammenstraat 81; 03.248.28.28
APR 5 15.00 La Morra: 15th-century music from the Burgundy courts

deSingel

Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28, www.desingel.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 1 Prometheus Ensemble conducted by Etienne Siebens, with Jan Michiels, piano; Geert De Bièvre, cello: Bartók, Ligeti, Nancarrow

Bruges

Concertgebouw

't Zand 34; 070.22.33.02, www.concertgebouw.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 3 Anima Eterna conducted by Jos van Immerseel with Katerina Chrobokova, harpsichord: Poulenc, Tchaikovsky, Barber
APR 4 Collegium Vocale Gent and Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin conducted by Marcus Creed with Sophie Klusmann and Brigitte Geller Tochter, sopranos; Hans Jörg Mammel, tenor; Alexander Schneider, countertenor; Sebastian Noack, bass: Handel's Brockespassion
APR 7 Ictus Ensemble 'Liquid Room'
APR 8 Arne Deforce, cello; Yutaka Oya, piano; Richard Barrett, electronics; Jan Huylebroeck, timpani with Aquarius choir conducted by Marc Michael De Smet: Rihm, Zimmerman, Beckett, Barrett
APR 9 Prometheus Ensemble conducted by Robin Engelen, in homage to György Ligeti with Jan Michiels, piano; Geert De Bièvre, cello: Bartók, Ligeti

Brussels

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 5 11.00 Atrium Quartet: Beethoven, Shostakovich

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
APR 3 12.30 M Poskin, violin; J-P Dassonville, French horn; C Bruneel, flute; K Le Compte, double bass; Levente kende, foreteipiano: Ligeti's Horntrio, Kurtág's Bagatellek

Flagey

Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20, www.flagey.be
APR 1 20.15 Anima Eterna conducted by Jos van Immerseel, with Katerina Chrobokova, harpsichord: Poulenc, Tchaikovsky
APR 3 12.30 Piknikmusik: Michael Schmid, flute; Koen Nuytens, double bass; Christophe Meierhans, laptop: M_Office/Tape That
APR 4 20.00 The Best Synthesizer: Liège Philharmonic conducted by Pierre-André Valade, with Gérard Caussé and the CRFMW (Centre de Recherches et de Formation Musicales de Wallonie): Mochizuki, Verrando, Dufourt

Kaaithheater

Saintelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaithheater.be
APR 2 20.30 Ictus Ensemble APR 3 19.30 Musicology Cafe: Dominique Pauwels introduced by Yves Knockaert
20.30 LOD in Judaspassie, world première written by Pieter De Buysser, staged by Inne Goris with music by Dominique Pauwels (musical theatre in English, Arabic and Hebrew with Dutch and French surtitles)

Royal Conservatory of Brussels
Regentschapstraat 30; 02.213.41.37

Concerts at 20.00:

APR 3 Royal Conservatory Orchestra and Choirs conducted by Philippe Gérard: La Forêt bleue, musical fairytale by Aubert

Théâtre Saint Michel

Pater Eudore Devroyestraat 2; 02.732.70.73
APR 3 20.00 Spring concert: Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Roger Bausier, with Roberto Fabbriani, flute: Schubert, Grego, Poot (free concert)



Brussels

De Munt

Muntplein; 070.23.39.39, www.demunt.be
Until APR 5 15.00/20.00 Le Grand Macabre by Ligeti with De Munt Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Hussain and Choirs conducted by Piers Maxim, staged by Alex Ollé and Valentina Carrasco

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera

Schouwburgstraat 3; 070.22.02.02, www.vlaamseopera.be
Until APR 9 19.30/15.00 Così fan tutte by Mozart with the Flemish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Attilio Cremonesi, staged by Guy Joosten with Maxim Mironov/Alexey Kudrya, Jacquelyn Wagner/Myrto Papatanasiu



Ardoos

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82, www.deschaduwnet
APR 3 20.30 Generation Dallas

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24, www.abconcerts.be
APR 2 20.00 Jef Neve

Archiduc

Dansaertstraat 6; 02.512.06.52, www.archiduc.net
APR 4 17.00 CO.ntradiction

Art Base

Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20, www.art-base.be
APR 3 21.00 ToralDacosseBracaval Trio, flamenco jazz

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
APR 3 20.30 Paolo Fresu Devil Quartet (Turin/Italian Spring Festival)

Jazz Station

Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 1 Eve Beuvs Quartet APR 2 Jazz Station Big Band APR 4 18.00 Le Petit Cirque

Sass'n Jazz

Koningsstraat 241; www.sazznjazz.be
Concerts at 20.30:
APR 2 LM3 + Jam session APR 3 Le Monde en Scène APR 4 Olivier Collette Trio APR 8 Project 204 APR 9 LM3 + Jam Session

Sounds Jazz Club

Tulpenstraat 28; 02.512.92.50, www.soundsjazzclub.be
Concerts at 22.00:

APR 1 22.00 Chamaquiando, salsa
APR 2 FBI Trio APR 3 Radoni S Tribe
APR 4 Phil Robinson Band APR 6
Master Session APR 7 Big Band APR 8
Chamaquiando, salsa APR 9 21.00 The
Singers Night

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45
Concerts at 20.30:

APR 1 Paul's 'Thank You' Party APR
2 10 Years 'Grand Jazz' - live from the
Music Village APR 3 Fred Delplancq
Quartet APR 4 André Donni Quartet
APR 8 Ruby APR 9 Alberto Moreno
Trio

Théâtre Marni
Vergnietstraat 25; 02.639.09.80
APR 7 21.30 Sébastien Llado Quartet

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,
www.stuk.be
APR 2 20.30 Minimal Complexity



Antwerp

Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060
APR 1 20.30 Il Divo APR 4 21.00
Back to the 90s with Haddaway, Dr
Alban, Vengaboys and Pat Krimson & 2
Fabiola + DJs

Borgerhout

Rataplan
Wijnegemstraat 27; 03.292.97.40
APR 3 20.30 Cryptonique

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 2 Fatima Spar & The Freedom
Fries + Jaune Toujours APR 4
Krakow + Elvis Perkins in Dearland
+ Jessica Lea Mayfield APR 6 Stijn
De Waarnemer APR 7 William
Elliott Whitmore + Alela Diane APR
9 Voodoo Trance Sound System
+ Tim Exile + Venetian Squares +
Squarepusher

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,

www.beursschouwburg.be
APR 4 20.45 Patton + Volcano!
(www.vkconcerts.be)

Gemeentehuis van Schaarbeek
Colignonplein; 02.513.38.18
APR 8 20.00 Tribute to Jacques Brel by
Le Triolet de Bruxelles

Le Botanique
Koningstraat 236; 02.218.37.32,
www.botanique.be
Concerts at 20.00: APR 1 Stuck in the
Sound APR 2 Les Fatales Picards APR
4 Ceux qui marchent debout. Pauline
APR 7 The Rifles

Recyclart
Ursulinenstraat 25; 02.502.57.34,
www.recyclart.be
APR 9 20.00 Dynamic Band + Nestor

VK Club
Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07,
www.vkconcerts.be
Doors open at 19.30:
APR 9 20.30 Pablo Moses + U-Roy

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 1 Yevgueni

Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be
APR 9 22.00 Ice Cube

Hasselt

Ethias Arena - Grenslandhallen
Gouv. Verwilghensingel 70;
070.34.50.50, www.ilovethe90s.be
APR 2 20.00 Abbamania, disco concert
APR 11 23.00-6.00 I Love the 90s - The
Party

Muziekodroom
Bootstraat 9; www.muziekodroom.be
APR 3 20.00 Jessica Lea Mayfield

Kortrijk

De Kreun
Jan Persijnstraat 6; 056.37.06.44,
www.dekreun.be
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 4-5 Sonic City with Dälek, Scorn,
Charles Hayward, Subtitle, Candie
Hank, Odattee, Zucchini Drive, Earth,
Zu, Small Silence, Guapo, Action
Beat, Uniform, 2nd Gen, Desctructo
Swarmbots, Joshua Booth APR 9
U-Roy & Pablo Moses

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Axelle Red

2 May, Antwerp

The fiery Axelle Red from Hasselt is celebrating 15 years in the business by staging a concert in Antwerp's Sportpaleis. With four million in sales and a reputation for providing France with its summer hits, she's become one of Flanders' best-known exports, guaranteed to wow fans as she sings about cracks in relationships, women's causes and global peace.

→ www.sportpaleis.be



Leuven

Het Depot
Martelarenplein 12; 016.22.06.03
Concerts at 20.00:
APR 2 US3 APR 3 Grandmaster Flash
APR 9 The Subways

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,
www.stuk.be
APR 2 20.30 The Bony King of
Nowhere + Library Tapes



Antwerp

Queen Elisabeth Hall

Koningin Astridplein 26; 0900.26.060
APR 4 20.00 Valery Meladze APR 9
20.00 Golden Gospel Singers

Zuiderpershuis

Waalse Kaai 14; 03.248.01.00,
www.zuiderpershuis.be
APR 9 20.30 Divna, Byzantine, Serbian,
Bulgarian and Russian songs

Brussels

Belle Vue Café
Henegouwenkaai 43; 02.414.29.07,
www.afroheat.be
APR 4 22.00 Afro Heat #2, a
celebration of 70s afro beatz with DJ
ReeDoo and Samy Ben Redjeb
(www.myspace.com/afroheatparty)

Espace Delvaux
Gratèsstraat 3; 02.672.14.39
APR 3-4 20.30 Wappa Tonic,
a-cappella, Latin and chanson

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
APR 2 20.15 Gianmaria Testa Trio,
jazz, bossa nova, folk

Stekerlapatte
Priestersstraat 4; 02.512.86.81,
www.stekerlapatte.be
Concerts at 21.30:
APR 2 Coralski APR 4 Paris-Bruxelles
APR 9 Jeanne Garraud & Vanesa
Garcia

Theatre La Rosaie
Alsembergsessteenweg 1299;
02.376.46.45, info@rosariae.org
APR 3 20.30 J'en Rafole, folk music
and dance



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
Until APR 3 20.00 Sister by and with
Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and
Vincent Dunoyer

Bruges

MaZ
Magdalenestraat 27; 050.44.30.60
APR 4 20.00 Triple Bill by the

Tero Saarinen Company (Finland),
choreographed by Tero Saarinen

Brussels

Espace Senghor
Waversesteenweg 366; 02.230.31.40,
www.senghor.be
APR 3 20.30 La Rubia, flamenco dance
and music

Wolubilis

Paul Hymanslaan 251; 02.761.60.30,
www.wolubilis.be
APR 2 20.30 Delay versus trio,
performance, dance, music, video by
and with Franck Beauvois, Lê Quan
Ninh and Patricia Kuypers

Leuven

Stuk
Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20,
www.stuk.be
APR 2-3 20.30 Les Ballets C de la B
in Ashes, new work choreographed
by Koen Augustijnen with music by
Handel arranged by Wim Selles

Ostend

Kursaal (Casino)
Monacoplein 2; 0900.26.060,
www.proximusgoformusic.be
APR 7 20.00 Celtic Legends, music and
dance show



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
APR 4 20.00 Het Toneelhuis in Maria-
Magdalena, staged by Wayn Traub (in
Dutch)

Stadsschouwburg
Theaterplein 1; 0900.69.900,
www.sherpa.be
Until APR 19 Elisabeth, musical (in
Dutch)

Ardoois

Cultuurkapel De Schaduw
Wezestraat 32; 0479.80.94.82,
www.deschaduw.net
APR 2 19.30 Dromendief (Dream
thief) (in Dutch)

Brussels

Bronktheater
Varkensmarkt 15-17; 02.218.20.15,
www.bronks.be
APR 5 15.00 Droomedaris in Saluut!
by Michael De Cock (in Dutch, five
and up)

KVS Bol
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00,
www.kvs.be
APR 3-11 20.00 Missie (Mission)
monologue by David Van Reybrouck,
performed by Bruno Vanden Broecke
(in Dutch with English and French
surtitles)

The Warehouse Studio
Waelhemstraat 69a; itg.
theatreinbrussels.com
Until APR 4 20.00 Irish Theatre Group
in Nurse Edith, based on the story of
Edith Cavell, written and staged by
Loretta Stanley (in English)

Leuven

Zaal Ons Huis
Goudbloemstraat 28; 016.20.30.20,
www.stuk.be
APR 8-11 20.00 Compagnie Cecilia in
The Broken Circle Breakdown featuring
The Cover-Ups of Alabama, theatre
with country music

Jezus-Eik

GC De Bosuil
Wetherendreef 1; 02.657.31.79
Until APR 3 20.00 German Theatre
Group EU in Liebschaften, one-act
plays by Curt Goetz (in German)

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Antwerp

Fotomuseum

Waalse Kaai 47; 03.242.93.00
Until JUNE 7 Erwin Olaf: EyeCandy 1984-2009, retrospective
Until JUNE 7 Yang Fudong: East of Que Village, video installation
Until SEP 13 Photography in Belgium during the Interbellum

Modemuseum (MoMu)

Nationalestraat 28; 03.470.27.70, www.momu.be
Until AUG 16 Paper Fashion, the use of paper and related materials in modern and contemporary fashion and 1960s paper dresses from the Atopos collection

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09
Until MAY 10 Camiel Van Breedam: Collages 2002-2008, recent works on paper by the contemporary Belgian artist
Until JUNE 14 Goya, Redon, Ensor: Grotesque paintings and drawings

Bruges

Arentshuis

Dijver 16; 050.44.87.11
Until SEP 27 The Museum of Museums 2009, installation by contemporary Flemish artist Johan van Geluwe

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12; 050.44.87.43
Until JULY 21 Charles the Bold. The Splendour of Burgundy, Flemish Primitive paintings, armour, tapestries, manuscripts, fine gold and silverware

Brussels

Argos Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03, www.argosarts.org
Until APR 11 Language Works: Video, Audio and Poetry, works by Vito Acconci
Until APR 11 I'm With You in Rockland, video work by Karl Holmqvist

Atomium

Atomium Square; 02.475.47.72, www.atomium.be
Until MAY 24 Bi-Polar. From South to North, scientific exhibition on current research and expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic

Belgian Comic Strip Centre

Zandstraat 20; 02.219.19.80, www.stripmuseum.be
Until MAY 17 Czechriculum Vitae, Czech history and legends in comic strips by contemporary Czech artists
Until JUNE 7 20 years of Manga in Europe, Japanese comic strips

Bozar (Paleis Voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until APR 19 Robbrecht & Daem: Pacing through Architecture, works by the Ghent-based architects
Until MAY 3 A4 - Louise Herlemont: Sans object, installations and photographs
Until MAY 17 Monumental installation by contemporary Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan (part of Turin Festival)
Until MAY 17 United Artists of Italy, 150 portraits of Italian artists by 22 photographers
Until MAY 24 From Van Dyck to Bellotto: Splendour at the Court of Savoy, paintings from Turin's Galleria Sabauda, with works by Flemish masters, including Brueghel, Rubens and Van Dyck (part of Turin Festival)

CCNOA (Centre for Contemporary Non-Objective Art)

Boulevard Barthélémylaan 5; 02.502.69.12, www.ccnua.org
Until APR 19 Things 1. # 3/4, works by contemporary artists from the Hisk in Ghent: Ruth Sacks, Bastiaan Schevers, Joris Van De Moortel and Frederik Van Simaey
Until APR 19 Paintings, murals and installations by Esther Stocker
Until APR 19 Paintings by Gracia Khouw

DON'T MISS

The world of Roger Raveel

Until 13 June

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

Works by the Flemish artist Roger Raveel are being exhibited at the De Loketten in the Flemish Parliament building. This is a chance to discover an artist with a quirky take on reality. In one of his most striking works, he included mirrors and a live canary in a cage. That one unfortunately isn't part of the show, but you can see paintings rarely seen before along with some works he has done in cooperation with the writers Hugo Claus and Rutger Kopland.

→ www.vlaamsparlement.be



De Elektriciteitscentrale European

Centre for Contemporary Art
Sint Katelijneplein 44; 02.279.64.35
Until MAR 29 Moet elke weerdheid wel gezegd? (Should Every Cruelty Be Said?), work by 102 artists on the theme of Belgium today

Design Flanders

Kanselarijstraat 19; 02.227.60.60, www.designflanders.be
Until APR 26 Zilveren Sterckhof opdrachten 1996-2008, silver works by 13 Flemish designers commissioned by Antwerp's Zilvermuseum
Until APR 26 Krehky, design uit Tsjechië, works in glass and porcelain by contemporary Czech designers

Espace Architecture La Cambre

Flageyplein 19; 02.642.24.50
Until MAY 31 Tel Aviv's White City, early 20th-century architecture in the Israeli capital, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site

Flemish Parliament - De Loketten

IJzerenkruisstraat 99; 02.552.40.43
Until JUNE 13 The World of Roger Raveel, paintings by the contemporary Belgian artist

Fondation pour l'Architecture

Kluisstraat 55; 02.642.24.80,

www.fondationpouirlarchitecture.be
Until OCT 18 De tijd van de boetiek (The Time of the Boutique), window shopping from 1800 to today

Jewish Museum of Belgium

Minimenstraat 21; 02.512.19.63
Until APR 19 Robert Capa, retrospective of the work of the Jewish-Hungarian photo reporter (1913-1954) and founder of the Magnum agency

Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis - Jubelparkmuseum

Jubelpark 10; 02.741.72.11, www.kmkg-mrah.be
APR 3-AUG 30 Vegetal City, how to reconcile city and nature, the vision for a sustainable future by Belgian architect Luc Schuiten

Natural History Museum

Vautierstraat; 02.627.42.38
Until AUG 30 X-treme, surviving in the most extreme climates and environments

Royal Army Museum

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33
Until MAY 3 Tribute to Pierre de Caters, first Belgian aviator, who flew over Belgium 100 years ago

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Regentschapsstraat 3; 02.508.32.11, www.fine-arts-museum.be
Until JUNE 30 Brussels Comics: Frames of Reference, 20 contemporary Belgian comic strip artists and works by those who have influenced them

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 1; 02.502.44.24
Until APR 5 Archeologie om de hoek (Archaeology around the corner), 20 years of archaeological finds in Brussels

Stadhuis

Grote Markt; 02.279.43.50
Until MAY 10 DeKadence: The Bohemian Lands 1880-1914, paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs

Tour & Taxis

Havenlaan 86C; 02.549.60.49
Until APR 26 It's our Earth! Interactive exhibition on sustainable development, with interventions by Belgian and international artists

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23
Until MAY 31 Wade Guyton, monochrome images on canvas by the contemporary American artist
Until MAY 31 Peter Buggenhouts, sculptures and installations by the Belgian artist
Until MAY 31 00 Picture This! Francesco Gennari, installation by the Italian artist

Ghent

Design Museum

Jan Breydelstraat 5; 09.267.99.99
Until JUNE 1 Connections, a selection of 100 textile objects from the 15th century to the present day
Until JUNE 1 Cool Dozen+, 13 chairs and 13 textile objects by Finnish designers
Until JUNE 1 Henry van de Velde, book designs by the Belgian architect (1863-1957)

Dr Guislain Museum

Jozef Guislainstraat 43; 09.216.35.95, www.museumdrguislain.be
Until APR 12 The Game of Madness: On Lunacy in Film and Theatre, representations of madness in films, plays, paintings and contemporary art

Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribbedreef 1 - Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mskgent.be
Until JUNE 21 Emile Claus and Rural Life, paintings by the Belgian Impressionist artist (1849-1924) shown alongside works by some of his contemporaries, Alfred William Finch, Léon Frederic, Constant Permeke,

Constantin Meunier and Henry Van de Velde

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
APR 4-AUG 2 Dara Birnbaum. Retrospective: the dark matter of media light, video installations redefining what it can mean to be a woman in a fast evolving world
APR 4-AUG 23 Beyond the Picturesque, interpretations of landscape in contemporary art with works by Marcel Berlangier, Damien De Lepeleire, Jan Kempenaers, John Timberlake and Mungo Thomson
APR 4-MAY 31 Kunst Nu: Where I'm likely to find it, installation by Satoru Eguchi

Witte Zaal

Posteernestraat 64; 09.267.96.77, www.francekunst.be
Until APR 4 Juliaan Lampens: architectural projects photographed by Jan Kempenaers
Until APR 4 Pieter Vanden Broecke: graphic works

Knokke-Heist

Cultuurcentrum Scharpoord

Meerlaan 32; 050.63.04.30, www.fotofestival.be
Until MAY 3 International Photography Competition
Until JUNE 7 Marcel Broodthaers: Texte et Photos, photographs and documents by the Belgian artist (1924-1976)

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)

Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75, www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until SEP 30 Cowboys and Indians

Ostend

Kunstmuseum Aan Zee

Romestraat 11; 070.22.50.05, www.beaufort03.be
Until OCT 4 Beaufort 03 - Art by the Sea: Third edition of the contemporary art triennial, with works by 29 Belgian and international artists as well as outdoor installations and sculptures in various locations of the Flemish coast

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa

Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11, www.africamuseum.be
Until AUG 31 Omo: People & Design, Hans Silvester's photographs of southwestern Ethiopia's nomadic tribes and objects from the museum's collection



Ars Musica 2009: 20th edition of the contemporary classical music festival featuring emerging musicians and composers, plus tributes to established modernists Ligeti, Dufourt and Pousseur

Until APR 10 at venues across the country
02.641.10.20, www.arsmusica.be

Beaufort 03 - Art by the Sea:

Third edition of the contemporary art triennial, with works by 29 Belgian and international artists
Until OCT 4 at Ostend's Kunstmuseum aan zee as well as outdoor installations and sculptures in various locations on the Flemish coast
070.22.50.05, www.beaufort03.be

Antwerp

Trance Festival: Festival with trance music from around the world. Also films, readings, performances and photo exhibition looking at Gnawa, Sufi, Voodoo, Zen and other practices
Until APR 5 at Zuiderpershuis, Waalse Kaai 14
www.trancefestival.org

CAFE SPOTLIGHT

Dancing Chocola



Kloosterstraat 159

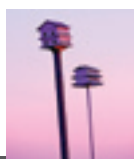
2000 Antwerpen

Don't get excited. The name is a remnant of a previous life and in fact there is no dancing and not a lot of chocolate in sight. Yet the interior of this intimate retro cafe is worth the trip even if there's no dancing to be done.

Close to Antwerp's Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Dancing Chocola has a summer terrace that is almost as famous as some of its customers. During the day, it's a quiet place where you can eat typical Belgian dishes (anyone for *frikadel-lenkoek met kriekskes?*), drink a beer and while away the night. After the eating is over, it becomes a packed hotspot aimed at the twenty-something and thirtysomething crowd and the patrons are as diverse as the lively music. Under the warm glow of dozens of light bulbs, each accompanied by its own personal lampshade, you can enjoy the view from the intimate mezzanine or stay down below close to the old-fashioned wooden bar. Everything is perfect except the beer, which quickly loses its head.

Vibrant Tangram and Gaudi-inspired mosaics can be found all over the place while the route to the toilets is indicated by a mermaid's protruding breasts. Decorated in warm and inviting colors, Dancing Chocola is filled with books and antiques to create an intimate atmosphere. What more could you ask for, apart from a dance floor and some chocolate maybe?





FACE OF FLANDERS

ALAN HOPE

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



© José Noel Dourmont



Lorenzo Gatto and Jolente De Maeyer

This week's Face of Flanders features two people, both from Brussels, and one of them not even remotely Flemish. But if there's one place where community questions should be put aside, music is it.

Jolente De Maeyer and Lorenzo Gatto are the two Belgian representatives in the opening stages of the Queen Elisabeth Music Competition, which starts on 4 May. This year the competition is for violinists, and there are 83 contestants in the first heats.

Jolente De Maeyer started playing violin at the age of four, and at 14 was invited to join the hothouse Yehudi Menuhin school at Cobham in Surrey, England. She also studied at the Royal College of Music, having graduated from the Brussels Royal Conservatory. Like any rising star, her CV is peppered with the people she's studied under (Menuhin himself, Dora Schwarzberg), the competitions she's entered (the Charles de Bériot, the Benjamin Britten) and the solo gigs she's had.

The list is exceptionally impressive; at only 25, she's already starred with the Kempisch Jeugdorkest, the Yehudi Menuhin Orchestra, the Brussels Youth Orchestra, the Vlaams Radio Orkest, the St. Petersburg State Academic Capella Chamber Orchestra, the St. Petersburg State Academic Capella Symphony Orchestra, deFilharmonie and Nuove Musiche.

As an observer of Queen Elisabeth competitions over the years (last year I sat through the entire finals for the first time), it seems to me the biggest killer for performers is nerves. There's nothing like a solid background

of performing experience to give an advantage, and concerts at the Wigmore Hall and Royal Albert Hall, as well as the Bozar, will help on that score. The presence of a home crowd, on the other hand, never seems to make a bit of difference. It's to the credit of the Belgian audience that they steadfastly refuse to play favourites with the home-grown talent.

She's also a member of the ensemble Frescamente, consisting of violin, piano, horn and clarinet, whose aim is to introduce audiences to "unknown or little-played classical and contemporary music". That includes composers like Carl Heinrich Reinecke (Germany, 1824-1910) and Jan Ladislav Dussek (Czech, 1760-1812), as well as the Flemish composer Jeroen d'Hoe (born Leuven, 1968) who composed a work specially for them.

For Jolente – whose name is a Flemish version of the very musical name Iolanthe – this is the second attempt at the Queen Elisabeth Competition. She tried already back in 2005, the last time violinists were on the bill. "I practice six to eight hours a day," she told *Het Nieuwsblad* at the time. "That's what you need to do if you really want to have a career as a violinist."

Lorenzo Gatto, meanwhile, is two years younger, of Italian extraction, and started playing the violin at the age of five. He entered the Brussels Royal Conservatory at the age of only 11, and scored 100% on the

public exam at the age of 15. From there he went straight to the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel, the school for prodigies where Jolente now also studies. Staff at the Chapel declined, understandably, to allow access to either of the Belgian candidates to *Flanders Today*.

Lorenzo has worked under not only Herman Krebbers, who gives his name to the violin competition in Maastricht, but also Augustin Dumay, who has been a jury member for the Queen Elisabeth competition before, and may be again – the names of the jury will be announced on April 30. Another former jury member with whom Lorenzo has studied, this time in Vienna, is Boris Kuschner.

Having said that, Lorenzo's familiarity with jury members is unlikely to offer any advantage. In the rarefied world of top violin performance, everyone seems to know everyone else, and you only reach the heights by studying with the greats – who in turn are the obvious choices for the juries of the various international competitions.

The first round of the Queen Elisabeth begins in the Conservatory on May 4, when they will each play a sonata by JS Bach, Concerto No. 1 by Bartok, and capriccios by Paganini. Then the field will be whittled down to 24 for the semi-finals from 11 to 16 May, again in the Conservatory. The final 12 face off in Bozar from 25 May.

→ www.cmireb.be



TALKING DUTCH



aprilvis →

Did you know that the word gullible isn't in the dictionary? Of course, only the gullible would be taken in by that. If you hesitated for a fraction to consider that gullible might not be included, then you should watch out today, 1 April. Today most newspapers have *een aprilvis* ("April fish") or *aprilgrap* – April Fool's joke – tucked away among the real stories.

The ones that fool most of us are those that are just a fraction off the truth. A favourite is the one in *De Gazet van Antwerpen* many years ago. The article began by describing the successful breeding programme of the zoo in recent years and, as you will know if you have visited Antwerp Zoo (next to the gloriously restored railway station in the centre of the city), how this was putting strains on the accommodation for the animals.

The director of the zoo had come up with a novel solution to the overcrowding: *elke bezoeker mocht een dier uitkiezen en mee naar huis nemen* – every visitor could choose an animal and take it home. That day the zoo had some 200 extra visitors, people who had fallen for the story. You can just imagine the first one buying an entrance ticket and asking: "Mag ik een koala meenemen? – Can I take a koala with me?"

I think I spotted one last week that was printed early

by mistake about a laser gun that can identify malaria-carrying mosquitoes and shoot their wings off by the million. Or perhaps fact is just that bit stranger than fiction.

There was a story a couple of years ago about Roger Federer really being Belgian. So what? The best ones are those that get people to do something stupid, like the TV inspectors story of 2000. At that time you had to have a TV licence in Flanders. The story on the TV news was that inspectors were preparing a massive street-to-street scanning campaign to deal with *zwartkijkers* ("black watchers") – TV licence dodgers – once and for all.

A journalist asked an inspector if nothing could block the surveillance equipment; the inspector let slip that wrapping your TV set in aluminium foil was a simple way of avoiding detection. And yes, you got it: *de volgende dag was al het aluminiumfolie in de winkels binnen enkele uren uitverkocht* – the next day all the aluminium foil in the shops was sold out within a few hours.

I thought it might be a bit of laugh writing an *aprilvis* yarn for this column but the editor rightly pointed out that such nonsense would bring Talking Dutch into disrepute. And we wouldn't want that, would we?

→ talkingdutch@gmail.com

The last word →→→

One man's meat

"Herman prefers a dry sherry to champagne as an aperitif, and has a taste for meat and fine charcuterie." The prime minister's chef reveals Herman Van Rompuy's tastes to *De Tijd*

Lonely at the top

"I used to be a diamond dealer. I moved in privileged circles, where I saw that rich people are often very lonely. They live in a golden cage. That's no way to start a relationship."

Luc Ackaert, founder of Ohana Elite, a dating service for the rich

Body count

"Somewhere along the way I lost count, but it must be more than a thousand. I've never in my life had a nightmare, and I hope it stays that way."

Joan De Winne, who is retiring as head of the police's cadaver identification team

Out of mind

"Let him start a new life there in Poland. Let him disappear into the crowd, and let us hear no more about him."

Françoise Van Holsbeeck, mother of the murdered teenager Joe, on her son's killer's departure for Poland